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The

American Historical Review

THE SUBSTANCE AND VISION OF HISTORY¹

THE numbers of those beings which throughout countless ages the biologist calls men because of structure, function, and outward semblance are at best small; and of these still fewer, a little minority, attained either to self-knowledge or to the power of writing any expression of it, to noting and communicating reasons for conduct. And of this little minority our only trustworthy account, very imperfect at that, covers at most the short space of ten thousand years. Within such narrow boundaries lies the field of history!

The very designation of our discipline cannot be defined: its etymology (*ἱστορία*—investigation) makes definition impossible, while labored explanation merely confounds confusion. We are utterly at variance as to either its genus or differentiae. Accordingly in this generation we have largely abandoned the concept of scientific history prevalent forty years since; the history students of scientific aspiration have impatiently discarded their very name, they announce themselves as investigators of international relations, of political science, of economics, of sociology, of many disciplines, every one of which has a certain definition but nevertheless is in all its ramifications a part of the general field once known as that of history.

This process is regarded by many of us with dismay. For this there is some reason, though not much. The innovator is always contemptuous of the rock from which facts, old or new, are hewn. But new methods cannot displace old learning. Whose history does he use in his science? Where does he get his facts? These are poignant, pregnant questions. The political scientists announce a return to the method of induction in their study, but it appears to many that they play fast and loose with the determination, statement, and meaning of the facts which are their subject-matter. One

¹ Annual address of the president of the American Historical Association, delivered at Buffalo, December 27, 1911.

of the foremost among them has recently found the seat of original political sin in the division of powers attempted under our Constitution, and so explains the consequent clash as inevitable, a deplorable result, which is remedied by bribery and corruption. His millennium is the blending of executive, legislative, and judiciary. Was Robert Walpole, the "jockey of Norfolk", a saint? He certainly mixed, confused, blended all three.

Another equally famous writer on the economic side has forgotten all the race, religious, traditional, and social differences between official England and her American colonies: so he finds the American Revolution to have been solely caused by trade rivalry and contentious merchanty. As for many other economists and the so-called economic interpretation of history, their procedure has been as purely theoretic and deductive, and arid, as was for long the most of their science, which passed merrily from phase to phase of dogma, each generation rejecting the "immutable" laws of the preceding, laws that turn out to have been nothing but vague generalizations from a state of society already passing into eclipse. The history of the sociologists is oftentimes so shallow and superficial as to be amusing, a tale narrated with serene unconsciousness of later, fuller knowledge, and composed in the light of a predetermined theory. It is a perplexing joy to read the certitude with which one of them juggles with so-called Anglo-Saxon feudalism as if the period had been investigated and were thoroughly understood; another interprets the least-known periods of history in the light of class hatred.

But all these dangers are slight because so manifest; and the rather noisy inventors of systems and doctrines have had their day. There is emerging a political science (politics) which is historical, an economics which is genetic and modestly disclaims all but its own share in the social movement, a sociology (sociologics) which admits its limitations to a very small portion of the very small field of true history. On the other hand, for the adventurous, there are the great and vast expanses of prehistoric archaeology, of anthropology, of geologic palaeontology, of animal and social psychology, within which these embryo sciences disport themselves to their own contentment, and, as far as they reveal themselves, to the instruction and sometimes to the intelligent amusement of historical students, or to the delightful bewilderment of a hardworking curiosity.

So far, therefore, from feeling unease we, who still rally under the banner of history, should more hopefully and confidently than

ever devote ourselves to the abundant harvest still to be reaped in our own standing corn; we ought cheerfully, gladly to accept the idea of historicities, to modernize ourselves and keep step with—no, outstep, the rather self-important specialists now declaring their independence; the amusing independence, it must be said, of children living on a handsome allowance from their parents.

To modernize history, to get and keep in the van, we must have recourse to two expedients: the first, a self-denying ordinance, the second, a graceful surrender. We must discard into the rubbish heap a series of thought-expedients which have done veteran duty and will not even now go on the pension list or be relegated to oblivion. Those of us who have merely finite minds are helpless before those who deal with the infinite, as it were, and who assert that the entire past is historic; that no savage ever scratched an outline on a flat stone, chipped a flint, or gnawed uncooked flesh off a bone, or gorged on shell fish and slept off the cold debauch huddled promiscuous with other man-animals in a cave for warmth, without each of these amazing incidents, or a million others, leaving behind it an historic residuum for the foundations of civilization. Then there is the infinite complexity of habit, of worship, of family, of institutions, of rudimentary politics. On these topics there are libraries of inconclusive literature, suggestive enough, but as yet proving nothing.

In very truth some of us are disenchanted at the results of Darwinian, Spencerian, evolutionary thought. Things in the natural and moral world have indeed seemed as if there had been and were still under way a process of becoming, as if lower forms of life gave rise to higher in a direct, immediate, operative causation and genesis, as if man were the resultant of all his ancestry with remnant survivals in body, soul, and spirit, of biologic traits from the amoeba, through all the orders down to the anthropoid, to the pithecanthropus, and what geology styles man, the punaluan man, the polyandric man, the polygamous man, the monogamous man. These are glittering seemings and suggest truth as pyrites suggest gold. Yet at the present hour, as always, there is not one single instance known of a transition between genus and genus, species and species, organic and inorganic, vegetable and animal, not even of race to race among men. Evolution does not bridge the chasm between appearance and thought, between the organic and inorganic, nor between the form becoming, which is nature, and that complete, which is reason.

Moreover a valuable biological concept is not necessarily worth

anything in history and the system which cannot account for conscience—as Huxley admitted—either individual or collective, can have no value in mass psychology, in explaining that succession of ideals which underlie all national behavior in every sphere. The fixity of things on the side of natural science has been shown forth more rigid and obdurate than ever by the earnest efforts of the ablest men, with boundless resources for investigation, through nearly a generation and a half of human life, men bent on finding exactly the reverse. With a consciousness such as this, doubly vivid in the case of the humanities, the unsapped energy of many in our field, both historically and evolutionally minded, has led to the sectionalizing and specializing of our discipline in the hope that, like the curate's egg, parts at least may be good enough to stand the test of Darwino-Spencerian thought. Nothing is so hard on intellectual pride as the discarding of laboriously constructed dogma.

Is there a better way? Yes. Let us drop that utterly hopeless infinitude of causation, both backward and forward, which the historically omniscient, pseudo-scientific polymaths so learnedly commend to our attention. “*Quel plus sur moyen*”, said Rousseau, “*de courir d'erreurs en erreurs que la fureur de savoir tout!*” The task as they state it is hopeless, and were it even capable of performance, the result, however bulky and massive, would be pointless in its results, inducing nothing but complete exhaustion. Nor can the work be performed by the division of labor, a specious device. No two men can possibly approach a small and limited enterprise in the same way without guidance from without and above.

The immense contrivances of trade, education, and government by which the world's work gets itself done to-day do not refute this proposition because somewhere in them each is a leader, contriver, ruler, with an immense salary paid for exceptional ability, and all the rest are clerks. Historical students, worthy the name, will never be clerks, never. They gallantly struggle for subordination in our bulky series books, the publication of which is a present-day phenomenon, and what happens is that the editor-in-chief becomes an almost impotent text-critic and reviewer. The affairs of the mind and of personality are conducted in history and must be, by a system inversely deductive, the contrary of that by which material affairs, scientific, commercial, or institutional, secure their prosperity.

Of course there are the vertical lines of division which endeavor to mark off cantles of the historic field for specialization, within each of which divisions an independent scholar may be sedulous and

successful. Supposing such workers to be soundly educated and properly equipped, daring but possible hypothesis, the result of their labors must be the material of the historian. He dare not disregard the studies and conclusions of specialists, their investigations and narratives, regarding the movements of human life, social, economic, governmental, military, diplomatic, linguistic, scientific, numismatic, medical, religious, literary, or whatever facet of man's activity may be turned to the examiner.

Frankly and freely accepting these conclusions as authoritative (and there is the rub of the matter), the historian may so far rid himself of the load of omniscience which would crush his own unbraced shoulders and loins, of the infinite detail which beclouds any finite mind, even the most discerning and discreet. To apprehend readily, to reason clearly, to judge correctly, the greatest intellect must have a finite case; for a mind to pass beyond its comfortable capacity and do normal work is impossible: there must be faith in others, confidence in their integrity and judgment. This is the first great step; the renunciation which, under existing conditions, we have to make, if we would clear the way for effective action; to wit: drop into the abyss of oblivion the load of personal omniscience and the distrust of the secondary authority or, in other words, of the results reached by faithful, honest specialists. Nothing is harder or more distasteful than this, because it wounds our pride.

The second act of renunciation which we have to perform does not so crush our spirit, but it is very, very hard because of the chains of habit. The terminology of history as hitherto written has become most confusing, because it is now meaningless. To illustrate, take a very recent example indeed; history is not past politics nor politics present history. We know with the reason that past religion, past social organization, past economics, past ambitions and thirst for power, past dogmas of secular belief, that all these enter into history, over and beyond politics in its narrow sense of government and administration; or, to invert the statement, we now recognize that politics, past or present, is the resultant of these forces and many others, too; in certain proportions at one time, in very different ones at others. Furthermore, whether or not there ever was one, there is not now a state-system in the sense given that term by Macaulay; there never was a balance of power, nor a tangible nationalism, nor a purely constitutional régime. There never was and is not now a Monroe doctrine, settled and fixed, either in the form of treaty, statute, axiom, or even maxim.

The moment any of these historical derelicts, once phantom

vessels driving, not like the *Flying Dutchman*, into the storm, but before it, struggles to get itself realized into law or even merely formulated, the process is promptly stopped, sometimes by diplomacy but also sometimes by war. But like the legend, the myth, and the fairy tale, this sonorous phraseology is much beloved. Indeed, these sounding words are the cherished jewels of political thought and journalism among the intelligent masses; and even the initiated, to whom I address myself, still find it easier to use the old, vague, inaccurate words than to invent and employ new and correct ones. Such invention, to be sure, is probably impossible; vocables are tenacious of life, and usage determines their sense and spelling alike, their pictographic values. But what is not impossible is that in our teaching and writing we should emphasize the new concepts which underlie the old phrases. The invention of a political stalking-horse has often been a more far-reaching achievement than the successful conduct of a great military campaign. "La politique consiste souvent dans le mensonge, et l'habileté est de pénétrer le menteur", said Voltaire. To what extent the terms of politics have been masks, in modern and contemporaneous history, we must settle, and having distinguished, abstracted, separated, examined, generalized, it is our exciting duty to put down the mask, if it were one, and show the personages behind it, in their hunt for money, glory, power, whatever impelled the "somebodies" of history and enabled the popular sentiment so to react as to give them support in their enterprises. This form of renunciation is therefore doubly difficult in that it demands untiring labor and an apostolic conviction in us if we are to secure persuasion in others, and reconquer the high place in the general esteem once held by history.

If we renounce the negative past and its study, if we renounce the fields of omniscience beyond the all-surrounding flood of human limitations, if we renounce antiquated concepts and catch-phrases, if we renounce the pride of self-sufficiency and the vanity of doubt, accepting the results of work done by other minds, we shall simply be doing what humanity has done at every stage of movement, relegating our rags to the rag bag, our rubbish to the rummage chamber, our trash to the ash heap. Dear me! yes; but how shall we recognize the rags, the rubbish, the trash? What some have so considered, proves with careful examination and at another time to be treasure. For this difficulty, as for so many others, there is a remedy, a prescription. Among the permanent gains of recent historical study is the useful doctrine known as the Unity of History. To us it is commonplace that in our ten thousand years of

historical record—more or less complete—there is no gap, no chasm, no abyss, that the continuity is complete if only we can discover it. Furthermore, from the days of Heeren onward we have known that what he proved as to Roman history, to wit: that we could not apprehend it without some clear knowledge as to Carthage, Persia, and Gaul in particular, and generally as to all the historical entities contemporaneous with it; we have known that this is equally true of history before Rome, of Greek, of Egyptian, of Assyrian, of Babylonian history, and of history since Rome, medieval, national, and contemporary imperial history. This meaning of the phrase Unity of History, the horizontal over against the vertical, is one which in our present state we have to emphasize until we discover by the sheer force of iteration, if in no other way, that it may transform all our activities. What is the “discard” of history? Ask, first of all, the age immediately preceding and reason backward from what you do know and may know to what you did not, but can now know. Study history transversely and horizontally, so to speak, as well as chronologically, and you will learn the relative values of contemporary forces, sufficiently at least to conclude what corresponding ones were in the past, near or remote. It is the merit of sociology to have taught us this.

Two things the public demands, the truth and the truth told entertainingly. Everything else it will sooner or later flout. Not only is there no harm in this demand, it is a righteous instinct; an artistic instinct, if you will, but righteous for all that. Sacred writers commend the beauty of holiness, that is, holiness because it is beautiful. There must therefore be a holiness of beauty. The historical writing which is not immediate, concrete, poignant, direct, proportionate, and clad in stylistic, attractive garb may have some present vogue but it is foredoomed to quick oblivion. Why therefore bother with it? Specialists know how to write their respective histories very well indeed: histories of philosophy, of religion, of economics, of various sciences, of all the multitudinous activities among men in thought and deed. In writing any such history they begin with their theme, its limits and its definition; exhaustive study takes them further and further afield, and forces them to take account of political, military, governmental, and administrative affairs.

But they begin with a very concrete and comparatively limited theme, to which the most successful writers return and return so continuously that, like the shoemaker, they earn the distinction of sticking to their last. The claim of absolute impartiality and the wide open mind is not much different from a claim to idiocy. Not

one of us wanders into the wilderness of events "um nichts zu suchen". What went ye out into the wilderness to see? Neither trifles, reeds nodding in a breeze; nor accomplishments, fine clothes and fripperies; but that which is hard indeed to find, a prophet. We go forth grimly determined to get a line on things, truth about facts and events, and the meaning of that truth. Talk of the "clean slate", "the house swept and garnished", "the fertile plot without plants": ready for the true writing, for the virtuous inhabitant, for the good seed. These are phantasies, interesting and important, but phantasies. We go forth, every one of us, with a mind furnished, ill or well furnished, but furnished, either with positive purposes or negative prejudices. And according to that equipment we seek what we want and we find what we seek.

Our greatest satirist has said that there is something fascinating about science; for a trifling investment you get such wholesale returns of conjecture. Likewise there is something fascinating about pessimism, we must admit; for a trifling investment in a mere vision, an ideal, we may indulge in such stupendous luxury of faultfinding and abuse, of self-righteousness, of vanity. The fancied better world which the pessimist contemplates by way of contrast with this is of course a chimera and, like that fabled beast, perhaps leonine to face and spitting fire, but goatish and rank in the midriff and utterly inefficacious in its caudal rear, an incongruous notion of his disordered fancy. Distinguishing the Hellenistic age of sensuous beauty, the Roman age of glory, the Christian age of faith and dogma, the modern age of enlightenment so-called, the coming age of reconstruction and socialism, it prepares us in this idea of all-government for disillusion and dissolution, to end in the golden age of Silence and Blank. This is Hartmann's religion of intelligence. To this the brilliant thinking of many among our advanced historians is directed and with considerable success. But this luxury we must likewise forego. It is the categorical imperative that history should be impartial: not the historian, he can only approach impartiality, but history must have no thesis nor be used to maintain one. The ermine of pessimism is not for history.

From this rather unpleasant task of disrobing, putting off the finery of old clothes and the jewelry of old heirlooms, aristocratic as they appear and ornamental too, let us see what positive position we may take, what new garments we may put on instead. They are not one but many because every negative so far indicated may be forced by skilful hands to furnish a positive print. As the best illustration of substituting for a dreary negative something at least

more positive, if not more comforting, I have chosen one which seems convincing. In selecting it there is the act of surrender to which I referred at the beginning, because it is an outline of what Droysen called historics within a portion of our field, small and distant but for that reason better capable of dispassionate examination. In this we follow the example of the material scientists, suggesting at least the idea of an historical laboratory and of exact results. In an effort to adapt method and matter from the rather contemptuous matadors of natural science, there is some humility and some chivalry: there is likewise the acceptance of special erudition and its adaption from modern French and German work, especially that of Seeck to which special indebtedness is acknowledged.

The latest criticism of history as a scientific discipline is identical with the earliest: it is that history cannot predict: it can establish facts and not laws. Let us frankly accept the test, but first let us consider for a moment the whole subject of natural laws as established by natural science, that is the uniformity of material nature as set forth in natural law. Uniformity without qualification is a misleading exaggeration. The most exact of the exact sciences are chemistry and physics, of these astronomy is agnate, and of astronomy meteorology is a department. What uniformity of nature makes possible weather prediction? Then let us consider science in relation to organic life; especially in the most important of all its relations, that to human life, or medicine, where the claim to prediction has so far been amusing. The retort springs to the lips: Give us more knowledge and we will secure an approach at least to prediction. This is exactly what the historian claims and, as we shall see, his approaches to accuracy are at least as near as those of the physician or the weather man. Is it not absolutely fair to say that only in so far as the exact sciences deal with identical materials under identical conditions do they approach exactitude?

In the next place even the tyro knows that distinctions once regarded as basic no longer exist, as for example, the various kingdoms of mineral, vegetable, animal; even the line between organic and inorganic, though not obliterated, is in places rather dim. Radiology is pretty hard to explain by the sacred law of the conservation of energy. Indeed according to the latest and highest authority, Planck of Berlin, both the kinetic and energy theories must in consequence be totally reconstructed: the new substitute, that of relativity, rocks the German world of science to its foundations. No mathematical formula exactly expresses the law of gravitation; the Ptolemaic system explains the facts of the universe almost, if not quite, as well

as the Copernican; there are still some very acute investigators who think in terms of devolution quite as successfully as those who employ evolution as a framework. Indeed, what is the prevalent pessimism, if not devolution? These are not quibbling considerations, not at all. Honor in the highest to the achievements of natural science, but equity too: in the group of sciences claiming to be most exact, there is at best but a more or less close approximation to law and prediction, a higher or lower degree of probability.

This pregnant truth is quite as true and even more striking in regard to biology and all its departments. Some twenty years ago there was bitter strife between the older natural science and the young knight of biology which leaped so debonair into the arena, demanding endowments and laboratories more costly even than the splendid palaces of chemistry, physics, and astronomy. Within this generation they have composed their quarrel and have concluded an alliance, offensive and defensive. But with what a surrender! the admission of a new meaning for natural law, the opening wide a door for such conjecture and such hypothesis! daring, limitless, vague, metaphysical to a degree never suggested by the humanities.² The meanest object which lives, vegetable or animal, lichen or earthworm, has a life and destiny all its own: we do not appear foolhardy in doubting whether any two cells, even, among the millions which form the thousands of leaves on any tree, are identical one with the other. The material of biology is individuals and these are just as hostile to universal rules as men and women. The laws of biology are fundamentally different, therefore, in scope and kind from those of chemistry and physics; yet no one denies that they are laws.

Take the famous and universally accepted law of natural selection—struggle for life and survival of the fittest—as an example. Helpful as it is in the study of life and the explanation of existence, immensely helpful as a principle, there is, in the first place, no mathematical formula for it; it is a law, but no prediction can be based on it and, worst of all, it requires no proof that an appreciable proportion of the unfit do survive, and of the fittest do not. This is a fact of the physical universe, not to mention the moral; using that word in its embryonic sense. Suppose that, of a hundred thousand fit, ten thousand survive and that, of a hundred thousand unfit, but a single hundred survive—and this is a very mild statement of what natural science admits as due to chance, whatever that may be—some factor beyond finite human grasp we may suppose—yet even in a

² Driesch, Bergson, etc., the metaphysical, vitalistic, speculative school opposed by Wilson, Bateson, Osborn.

case so extreme as the one we have cited, prophecy as to survival is impossible. Both the attraction of gravitation and the survival of the fittest are admittedly natural laws: the former is far nearer the line of absolute uniformity than the latter, though neither reach it. Radioactivity demands a radical modification of the concept underlying the phrase: conservation of energy. Fairness demands the admission that the test of prophecy throughout the universe of nature is relative, a question of probability.

Have we to come further down the ladder to apply the test of prophecy to history? Not much, if any. What else than prophecy is practical politics, statesmanship, as working in the past and all about us? A sporting man would even back the ward politician as against the weather prophet. So humble, but so useful a public servant knows human nature in its stable quality and unstable behavior with amazing accuracy when it comes to reckoning the strict party vote, the independent vote, and the venal vote; and his calculations are uncommonly reliable. But why is the meed of supremacy so universally awarded to the statesman as the king of men? Because he secures legislation and forms policies upon the basis of historical research, because from these he prophesies and secures results quite as often as similar predictions come true in natural science. This is the stable element in government, highest of human activities. Just as the more a meteorologist knows of temperature, wind, barometric pressure, and hygrometry, the more exact is his foretelling, so the more ministers and lawmakers know of history, the more trustworthy will be the operation of what we call ethical principle as set forth in human laws. Chance counts for just as little in statesmanship as in medicine. Humanity is, after all, a part of nature; there are human natural laws quite as really as there are material natural laws.

Ranke told us we must be content to determine "wie es gewesen sei", how *it* was; but neither he nor his followers made any serious effort to define the *it*, to fix the limit of investigation, how *what* was. We have searched the parish registers to determine the birthday of Oliver Cromwell or gathered information about that of Abraham Lincoln: side by side was just as accurate information about the appearance on earth of Henry Longworth, or of Francis Marden. To these rude forefathers of the village we are indifferent, to the other facts we devote ourselves. Those were historical characters, these were not, worthy as they may have been in their lives. Some facts are pregnant of historical results, other are not. Common-sense and instinct for the most part tell us what *it* was that is worth investigation, and what *it* was that is not. The search for pregnant

facts means the tracing of cause and effect, which is the establishment of law, natural or historical, statutory or otherwise, law in any of its widely various meanings. This is philosophy: Why are things as they are?

The highest and most delicate compliment which the natural sciences pay to history is the adoption of the historical method. It is within our own memories that they began to take stock: to ask where are we and how did we get here. This very striking fact is epochal. The wonders of the far-distant ages must be scrutinized for its parallel. The Greeks knew the amazing changes of the sixth century B. C. and we do not; in the fifth they began to take stock, to search for the foundations and the discoveries of things. Hecataeus found the phrase in his famous "*κτίσεις καὶ εύρηματα*": the rise of city states, but also of the tribes, clans, and families within each, genealogy was history: on this foundation or basis were the "discoveries and inventions", the introduction of custom and law under which order was maintained. The first philosophers were natural philosophers. Thales derived the world from water and Heraclitus from fire: equally naïve and childish is the genealogy of the Greek people: deluge, then Deukalion and Pyrrha, who begat Hellen, the sire of Aeolus, Dorus, and Xuthus, father of Achaeus and Ion, in consequence you have the Aeolians, Dorians, Achaeans, and Ionians. There you are; could anything be more simple and complete?

Yes, natural history and human history were alike childish but—they were significant of the same passions for origins as dominate the scientific mind to-day and they showed the way in manly fashion. They fixed the goal of both science and the humanities: Account for what is, reject what has no bearing on things as they are. This is exactly what the scientific men of to-day who write the history, that is trace the genesis of their science and its advance, exactly what they do and, in so doing, they are an example to us. They do not range the universe, but carefully delimit their field, nicely defining their subject and sensibly eschewing omniscience, a foible to which long ago they were much given, as much given as are those of my colleagues to-day who range so far afield in search for novelty that, suddenly caught and questioned, they shamefacedly confess that history itself is of slight interest to them and guess that perhaps there is no history at all. Here we owe and acknowledge a boundless debt to natural science, and as we have accepted and answered, convincingly we hope, their challenge as to the test of prophecy, let us turn briefly and consider history writing both genetically and exegetically.

In secular history Hecataeus was our Newton. What he knew and stated, *viz.*, that history was concerned not with the past as a whole but only with so much of it as accounts for the present, this is the character of our discipline. Herodotus found his predecessors dull and prosy and wilfully forgot their position. He announced it as his task to make known glorious deeds as the heritage of his people, and to this he devoted himself. The aim of snatching from oblivion great men and their actions as a stimulus to posterity was not scientific, but it was educational. History as written to-day, and especially as taught in the schools, never loses sight of this use for history, not for a moment. Thucydides has the supreme merit of writing in one narrative the explanation of the present and the recording of glorious deeds as a possession forever (*κτῆμα ἐσ ἀεὶ*). He is as scientific as Hecataeus and as absorbingly interesting as Herodotus. Why was this possible? Was it a stroke of that underived thing we call genius? Not entirely.

At this point there is again a rather striking parallel between old and new. Teachers are not much given to counting their mercies, but there is one inestimable privilege we enjoy, that of associating with colleagues in other lines on terms of intimacy. From the conversation and monographs of scientific men the fact emerges that the limit reached in their means of research is exasperating. The telescope and the microscope permit the sense of sight to go only so far: the profane say that in the photographs of Mars striations are due to imperfections of arrangement in chemical atoms on the photographic plates. The instruments of precision in physics are too small; and untrustworthy beyond a certain point. Chemistry too has its troubles and mathematics requires new stuff for further advance. Natural science tends to metaphysic on one side, to industrial and mercantile applications on the other.

In a rudimentary way the same thing occurred in Greece, only there the primitive means of research were so imperfect that natural science degenerated more speedily into sciolism. The mercurial and impatient Greeks were bored to extinction by the dull iteration and unfulfilled promises of natural science. Accordingly, when Socrates asserted that man was more interesting than nature and more easily investigated, since the instruments of research are within each of us, that conduct is an ultimate test and behavior easily observed, there was a sigh of relief and a hearty welcome for a human philosophy as a substitute for the natural. So it was that Thucydides found not merely a scientific but a moral element in history. So Polybius put the matter at a later date: Experience alone determines the effects of an action. This test is too hard, too tardy, too ruinous for the

individual in most cases. But history enables us to determine such effects without personal loss or suffering, and with great personal advantage. The experience of those who lived before us or are living with us in other spheres of action, shows what we may do and leave undone with advantage, or to avoid harm. We too are men, human nature is as persistent as material nature; like causes give like results. Then as now emerged in morals as in nature the test of science, the ability to prophesy.

If any buttress to this impregnable position were needed it could be found in a narrative far older than that of the Greeks: the cosmogony, the foundations, and the discoveries of the Hebrews as narrated in their and our sacred books. Those of other earliest peoples have been found and deciphered within a lifetime. One and all they record origins, foundations, discoveries: our own stand forth unique and convincing by reason of their moderation, proportion, and the better we understand them, of their plain, sound common-sense. A great divine of unquestioned orthodoxy says that they are a wonderful charcoal sketch of what might well have been. To the account of the creation, with whose general outline that of natural science fairly agrees as far as it has gone, there succeeds immediately a genealogical system exactly parallel with that of Hecataeus, only more reasonable because the names are mainly collective or gentile designations. The foundations having been stated, discovery and invention at once follow. Jabal is the father of herdsmen and breeders, Jubal of musicians, Tubal Cain of smiths, Noah of vine-dressers, Nimrod of hunters. The books of Judges, Kings, and Chronicles are the Herodotus of the Jews. In the moral lessons continuously extracted from the facts regarding persons and peoples we have the prototypes of Thucydides and Polybius. There is not the slightest proof that one such record influenced the other: on the contrary, since the Greek despised a barbarian as the Jew a Gentile, we may fairly draw the conclusion that on the higher plain of culture the procedure followed by both satisfies the universal want of thoughtful minds.

Much, very much of the history written before us is dead, and a good deal was still-born, then as now. What is still alive and is still read from the early days we have been considering until now will be found to contain all the elements enumerated. It either rescues noble deeds from oblivion for the emulation of posterity; or, it explains the present by just so much of the past as is needed; or it connects causes and results in human conduct so as to establish law; or more likely still it does all three in varied proportions. There is in it religion, philosophy, pedagogics, and science. It is but a

question of degree as to its scientific quality, and the element of science is steadily becoming larger in the composition. With physics turning into metaphysics, with chemistry turning industrial, and with biology confining itself to description—all alike declining either generalization or prophecy beyond the present stage, it seems possible and probable that the next scientific advance will be in history and the other humanities.

The laboratory of all science is antiquity. Nature is very, very old, and it is with nature, in nature, that natural science experiments. Physical laws are ubiquitous and omnipresent. The experimenter is the doubter and employs the little sample to test the huge mass; the infinitely little to measure the infinitely great. The results attained have been marvellous, but with advance the fallacy of this procedure suddenly appears and calls a halt. Scientific reality as measured by finite sense cannot go all the way; though we tunnel mountains to get bigger and bigger telescopes, though we scrutinize infinitesimal error by the test of mathematical formula, yet at a certain point, what is called the scientific imagination must be enlisted to guess the rest. These guesses for the future have enormous value and the value is exactly proportionate to the distance traversed in reality, the penetration into a far-distant past.

Why is this not equally true of a human discipline? It is. As nearly as an historian may have a laboratory, that laboratory is the earliest past. Hebrew has throughout the long ages been a spoken language for some few. Greek is a living tongue at this hour for more than eight million people. The Bible has been a vital force for five thousand years, Greek history for three. The examples of both have been the guide for many men in many ages; the last great cataclysm of modern history was in a measure due to young Bonaparte's devouring Plutarch's Lives. The concept of universal empire never perishes: at the moment there are five potentates who wear a title derived either from the Caesars or from Charles the Great. Our religions are Semitic, our philosophies Greek, our governments Roman, our art Chaldaean or Egyptian. We live, in spite of ourselves, in the longest perspective we can secure. Earth and man alike are besprinkled with antique dust; we emancipate ourselves slowly, agonizingly from the bondage of the past. Nothing is much harder than to commit junk to the junk heap, to feed the melting pot; one thing only is perhaps more difficult, to know junk when you see it. This is possibly the greatest achievement of the human mind.

In the laboratory of antiquity the historian has some manifest advantages, short as his perspective is. It is a laboratory in which all the experiments have been performed and the results only remain

to be interpreted. These experiments, moreover, were made not in the little but in the great; on a great stage, on a great scale, with a huge mass. If anything be petty it is the human vision and judgment, not the stuff and the apparatus. The nearer the facts, the greater the perplexity; the longer the perspective, the clearer our insight, the plainer are proportions and relations, the easier the interpretation. So complex has the world of civilization, the historical world, become that at first the ancients seem childish and simple. But the movement of multitudes, the dispersions of races, the discovery of proportion and discipline, the worthlessness of un-historic size and countless numbers when confronted by the trained, disciplined little bands of historic heroes firm in their convictions, courageous in their behavior—all this is not childish but mature in a maturity never since surpassed, if indeed equalled. Their poetry is our despair, their art our master, their history our model; and what after all are our inventions compared to theirs? The amazing idea of picturing not things alone, but sounds; of analyzing complex sounds into simple ones; the discoveries of navigation, of trading, of international relations in peace and war, of government in the large on the basis of common welfare, of federating states! These all are ripe products of great minds. In the historical perspective we behold the experiment completed and deduce results more permanent and practical than those of natural science, bewildering as they are.

In this laboratory of history there is found something even more tremendous: that strange intermingling of necessity and liberty which forms the web and woof of history. It was Plato who wrote the first of what have been called paper-states: having set the example, others have followed it in steady succession until in our day utopias swarm like buzzing bees. The utopia or "no where" commonwealth is everywhere. These ideals have always been of importance to nation builders—as important as the plumb-line to the mason—inasmuch as under their influence the worthless past has fallen as did the walls of Jericho before the ram's-horns. Untempered idealism, whether of philosophy, theocracy, or humanism, continuously works havoc; ruin and frightful desolations ensue. But this very poison is the tonic of history. If mingled in due proportion with historical evolution it has changed the man in slow advance by man's knowledge of himself, it has regenerated the pagan family, the heathen state, and the Christian Church. There must be change if there is to be improvement; it is experience and idealism in just proportion which produce reform without revolution, change without chaos. While thus in the ancient world we

see the will unfettered as to speculation, we likewise reach the conviction that in practice things are as they are by absolute necessity. What a discovery! We dare not rationalize politics but, on the other hand, what an anchor of hope it is that though the dreams of men are valueless in themselves, the deeds to which they have impelled were the source of an almost miraculous amelioration of all human conditions.

The climax of values in the historical laboratory is the promise of the future, prediction again. Amid the results of ancient experimenting, lines apparently parallel meet, negations become positive, the inexplicable is made clear. So those who succeed us will find the solution of what are insoluble problems to us: the problems of medievalism and the survival of its unfittest elements, the problems of modern and contemporaneous history in its blind gropings for what perspective will make clear. In the discarding of threadbare words and terms, in the rejection of material which explains nothing, in the shaking off of institutional clothes which are merely stage frippery and tinsel, we may contribute our share to the majestic experimentation of history; succeeding ages will see the simplification of our problems and their solutions, as we may and do the processes in the ancient world. Not one of our modern nostrums is new; they tried them all, suffered, and relegated them to the chamber of horrid memories. This we know. We know, moreover, that if the ancients talked like angels they behaved like devils. We used to idealize them, some few still do. But sobriety desires no return, not even to the age of Pericles; the craft, the guile, the guilt of a time splendid and glorious. We know at what a cost of ruin and disgrace and final annihilation Greek society purchased it. We prefer the better, sweeter, purer lives of mankind, the sanity and patience of higher existence: the halo has vanished, the nimbus has been dispelled. We realize that it is far more important to live and to struggle, to conquer, yes to be conquered, in an age that by example and warning has secured grander ideals, wider experience, broader and deeper knowledge. And what history has done, true history will do, scientifically, sensibly, temperately, *in saecula saeculorum.*

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